

John Henry Hutchings House
2816 Avenue O
Galveston
Galveston County
Texas

HABS No. TX-154

HABS
TEX
84-GALV,
30-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HABS
TEX
84-GALV,
30-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. TX-154

JOHN HENRY HUTCHINGS HOUSE

Location: 2816 Avenue O, Galveston, Galveston County,
Texas.

Present Owner
and Occupant: Mr. and Mrs. Sealy Hutchings.

Present Use: Residence

Significance: The original Hutchings house, now a wing of the
larger later structure, was one of Galveston's few
early brick residences. The main house erected
at a later date is one of the few neo-
Renaissance residences in Galveston. Hutchings
was a prominent Galveston banker.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Dates of erection: Original house built 1856-1859. After heavy damage from a storm, the house was remodeled and enlarged to its present state between 1885-1891.
2. Architect: The remodeling and enlargement was done by Nicholas J. Clayton, one of Galveston's most noted architects.
3. Alterations and additions: A tropical hurricane in 1885 damaged the property to some extent and by 1889, \$1,506 had been expended on "repairs and additions." Nicholas Clayton was engaged as the architect for the remodeling work which he referred to as "frilling." It was at this time that Clayton designed the medieval style brick stable on the northeast corner of the property. The work was completed by the middle of 1889 at a cost of \$4,000.

The Sanborn fire insurance maps indicate that the house was changed from its earlier appearance to that as we know it between the years 1889 and 1891. Attribution of the work has not been verified except for the fact that Clayton, between June 1888 and April 1889, was at work on "remodeling" and "frilling" the house. It seems probable that he may be considered the architect for the house as it stands today. He definitely designed the stuccoed brick fence that surrounds the property. This was in the spring of 1892 and would be the finishing touches to the complete remodeling of the premises. This work consisted of adding a

third story to the house, replacing the south double gallery and west porch and stuccoing the brick walls, and the building of the brick stable and stuccoed brick fence.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

John Henry Hutchings was born in North Carolina, February 2, 1822, and moved to Galveston in 1845. Ten years later, in 1854, Hutchings, John Sealy, and George Ball established the banking and commission firm of Ball, Hutchings and Co. The firm dealt largely in cotton and during the Civil War blockade conducted business in Matamoras, Mexico. Following the war, the firm returned to Galveston and re-established itself as a banking firm. Following George Ball's death in 1884, the firm was known as Hutchings, Sealy and Co., bankers. Hutchings in addition to his banking enterprise was also at one time president of the Galveston Wharf Co. and the City Company. He died on March 31, 1906.

In 1856 Hutchings married Minnie Knox, a niece and ward of Robert Mills. For a wedding present Mills gave the young Hutchings the west half of his ten-acre outlot and is said to have erected a brick residence for the newlyweds. The dwelling, a large, square two-story structure, was believed to have been completed by 1859, and constructed of red brick burned in Mills' Brazoira brickyard. A two-story gallery was on the south facade and a one-story porch on the west. In both the columns were of the Roman Tuscan order, unfluted and with distinct entasis and correct capitals and bases. A classical molded cornice terminated the standing seam metal-covered hipped roof. A square wooden lantern with two windows in each facade capped the whole structure.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Clayton, Nicholas J, Account Book

Clayton, Nicholas J, Office Diary

2. Secondary and published sources:

Brindley, Anne, ed. Historic Galveston Homes

Galveston News. June 1889, Special Edition

Prepared by: John C. Garner, Jr.
Director
Galveston Architecture Inventory
August 1967

PART III. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The main house is a large rectangular block, three stories in height with a flat one-story portico on the south elevation, the latter having also a two-story gabled portico. Details are Renaissance and Romanesque in origin.
2. Condition of fabric: The walls are in good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Foundations: Brick
2. Wall construction: Brick exterior, stuccoed. Corbelled decoration on third floor.
3. Structural system: Load bearing brick walls.
4. Porches: A one-story porch is located on the south elevation and one on the west. They are supported by tapered unfluted columns having Romanesque cushion capitals and molded base, on pedestals with an arcuated balustrade.

The classical molded cornice with brackets is repeated on the two-story portico on the west front that straddles the lower one. This porch has a pediment front and is supported by full height columns in the same style as those of the one story porch.

A double porch on the rear connects the two eariler sections of the house. This porch has wood post supports with wood balustrade; simple molded cornice.

5. Chimneys: Chimneys are located in the outside walls on the east and west facades. They have the appearance of pilasters.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The entrance on the west side opens into a shallow vestibule which in turn opens into the stair hall by double doors with etched glass panels.

A second entrance on the south side opens onto the north-south hall.

- b. Windows: Those in the west wall are four-over-four light double-hung wood sash, with a molded panel to the base board. On the south wall they are four-over-six light double-hung wood sash at floor level.

Windows in second story are six-over-six light double-hung wood sash.

- 7. Roof: Gable over main house.

C. Description of Interior:

- 1. Floor plan: The main house is virtually square in plan with two entrance halls, one running west to east, the other south to north, joining to form an "L" shaped hall that isolates the main parlor at the southwest corner of the house. A smaller parlor is opposite at the southeast corner and adjoins the dining room which takes up the northeast corner. A small library occupies the northwest corner of the plan. The wings on the north are variously divided into sitting rooms and bedrooms above and on the ground floor the kitchen and mechanical rooms.
- 2. Stairway: A half-turn stair with landings is located at the juncture of the two entrance halls. The stringer is molded with panels as is the soffit. Square white painted newel posts repeat the molded panel pattern. The balusters are turned and finished in dark stain and varnish.
- 3. Floor: Floors are all modern replacements. Main house lower floor is quarter-sawed oak.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls and ceilings are principally painted gypsum board. The entrance halls have a paneled wood dado with wall paper above.
- 5. Doors: The interior doors on the ground floor have been removed in recent years.
- 6. Trim: All door openings have classical molded trim simulating paneled pilasters supporting a molded entablature and cornice. Window openings also have wide molded trim. The entrance halls have a very deeply molded plaster cornice as does the southwest parlor, although not as deep. The other major rooms have a less elaborate plaster cornice.
- 7. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Hardware: Heavy brass butt hinges on the doors, mortice locks.

- b. Lighting: Electric fixtures.
- c. Heating and air conditioning: Modern central unit. Fireplaces are still used occasionally on the lower floor. Elaborate carved wood mantels with marble facing and hearth.

D. Site:

1. Orientation and general setting: The house occupies the southwest quarter of Outlot 40 and faces west.
2. Outbuildings: A brick stable occupies the northeast corner of the property. It is one and a half stories, stuccoed brick with a circular tower at the southwest corner and a projecting central gable on the south. Several dormers intersect the main hipped roof. A recent one-story garage addition has been made at the southwest corner.

Prepared by: John C. Garner, Jr.
Director
Galveston Architecture Inventory
August 1967

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Galveston Survey was jointly sponsored by the National Park Service, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation and the Galveston Historical Foundation Inc., and developed under the direction of James C. Massey, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS). The historical data was written by John C. Garner, Jr., acting as the Director of the Galveston Architecture Inventory. The written data was edited for transmittal to the Library of Congress in the summer of 1980 by Kent R. Newell of HABS staff. The photographs were taken by Allen Stross in the summer of 1967.